

**REPORT ON MASTER THESIS**  
**CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES**

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| <b>STUDENT:</b>             | <b>Evgeniya Dubinina</b>   |
| <b>ADVISOR:</b>             | <b>Vasily Korovkin</b>   |
| <b>TITLE OF THE THESIS:</b> | <b>Impact of Special Economic Zones on the Domestic Market:<br/>Evidence from Russia</b> |

***OVERALL ASSESSMENT** (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):*

**CONTRIBUTION:**

Evgeniya's thesis aims to contribute to an old but still very relevant question of the effectiveness of place-based policies. She considers a very interesting case of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Russia. Apart from the obvious policy implications, this thesis's main advantage is in the natural experiment that this Russian case provides. This natural experiment allows for clean causal identification. Moreover, the effects of such policies on the level of firms, rather than geographic regions, are less extensively studied, which I also find to be a novel result.

The thesis finds interesting results for firm productivity and revenues and hints at the potential reduction of misallocations driven by the SEZ policy. I find it an important marginal contribution to the urban economics literature.

**METHODS:**

Evgeniya used several sources of the data to compile her baseline dataset. Those are the official data provided by the Statistics Service of Russia (ROSSTAT), the Federal Tax Service data; she manually collected the information on the special economic zones from the official website and finally added the accounting data on firms from the SPARK-Interfax database.

To achieve the causal interpretation of the findings, she used the differences in differences approach, augmenting it with lags and leads, probing the results robustness. Such specification allows studying parallel trends and looking at the long-term effects simultaneously. She does not find any evidence on the pre-trends.

The author also relies on several robustness checks and aims at instrumental variable strategy based on the interactive instrument. The exclusion restriction might not be satisfied for this instrument, so in the end, Evgeniya argues against relying very heavily on those results.

**LITERATURE:**

The literature review is comprehensive. It covers all the existing research on similar topics with cases from China, Poland, India, and several African countries.

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:**

I find it very well-structured. Please see the details below.

**SUMMARY AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION DURING THE DEFENSE:**

The thesis uses relevant and state-of-the-art methods to explore an existing question and add evidence from a new country. The results are novel and exciting, though in line with the literature. It would be great if the author can discuss the mechanisms more during the defense, even just in a speculative form.

Let me reiterate that I find the thesis to be excellent, both in the substance and its form.

**I recommend the thesis for defense.**

**TEXT ORIGINALITY CONTROL**

I confirm that I acquainted myself with the report on the originality of the text of the thesis from

Theses  Turnitin  Ouriginal (Urkund)

**Comments on the reported results:**

I am confident that it is an original thesis. There are some slight similarities, but an overall Turnitin score is very reasonable and low

**SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED**

| <b>CATEGORY</b>                         | <b>POINTS</b> |
|---|---------------|
| Contribution <i>(max. 30 points)</i>    | 26            |
| Methods <i>(max. 30 points)</i>         | 29            |
| Literature <i>(max. 20 points)</i>      | 20            |
| Manuscript Form <i>(max. 20 points)</i> | 17            |
| <b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)</b>   | <b>92</b>     |
| <b>GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)</b>    | <b>A</b>      |

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:**

Vasily Korovkin

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

August 20, 2021



**REFEREE SIGNATURE**